

Elon Musk arrived in Beijing on Sunday (File)

Tech billionaire Tesla CEO Elon Musk boarded a plane departing Beijing on Monday, an AFP journalist said, after a whistlestop visit that saw his firm win a key data security clearance from Chinese authorities.

Musk arrived in Beijing on Sunday for his second trip in less than a year to China, meeting with top officials including Premier Li Qiang, as he worked to boost his company's fortunes in the world's biggest electric car market.

On the same day, Tesla's locally produced models listed among the EVs that meet China's data security requirements, clearing a key regulatory hurdle.

The magnate boarded his private jet at Beijing Capital Airport just before 1:00 pm (0500 GMT), with Chinese state-backed flight tracking app Utrip saying the plane was bound for Anchorage, Alaska.

The US electric car giant also appeared to inch closer to government approval to use its assisted driving technology in China by teaming up with tech titan Baidu for maps and navigation features, Bloomberg reported.

Despite intensifying competition from domestic firms such as BYD, Teslas remain among the best selling electric vehicles in China, but it is trying to boost sales with features such as "Full Self Driving" (FSD), which need to be compliant with strict data and privacy laws.

The China Association of Automobile Manufacturers said it had been testing vehicles since November 2023 with a national computer security regulator on how they collect and process data, including personal information and recordings of faces outside the car.

"Among them, 76 models of six companies (BYD, Li Auto, Lotus, Hozon Auto, Tesla, and NIO) meet the four compliance requirements of automotive data security," CAAM said in a statement.

Tesla's Model 3 and Model Y, produced at its gigantic factory in Shanghai, were on the list.

The company's advanced assisted driving features do not make its cars fully autonomous, and Tesla says its Autopilot and FSD capabilities are meant to be used under driver supervision.

It sells FSD for \$8,000 in the United States, or for a monthly \$99 subscription.

Tesla did not immediately respond to AFP queries about FSD in China and the reported partnership with Baidu.

Promoted Listen to the latest songs, only on JioSaavn.com

Earlier this month, in response to a question on his social media platform X, Musk said FSD availability in China "may be possible very soon".

(Except for the headline, this story has not been edited by NDTV staff and is published from a syndicated feed.)